



## The Amateur in You, Part 1

*What have you been pondering?*



### Social media in disaster communication

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, TikTok, and yes, even LinkedIn and YouTube are among a numerous collection of online sharing and collaboration platforms we term **social media**. They allow people worldwide to engage in communal activity by posting comments, photographs, documents, videos, and much more.

#### Online tool

Because a huge volume of people use social media, it can be a lifeline for those who are in trouble, and are looking for help. It can also be an online collection point for vital information, meaning we can use it to coordinate a rescue, a family check-in, or for citizen location, health, and welfare accounting. Some use social media as their method of maintaining an **out-of-state contact**.

During a disaster, the internet might become locally unavailable, rendering social media somewhat useless. But two points to keep in mind are 1) **the internet will likely remain available in most incidents** and 2) **the internet won't likely be down everywhere**. In all likelihood, you'll still be able to reach many people in spite of the emergency.

Through the use of social media, members of the public who witness incidents can provide public safety organizations with timely, geographic-based information. This can be used by decision-makers in planning response strategies, deploying resources in the field, and, in turn, providing updated and accurate information to the public.

From **CivicPlus**, *If you fear that your emergency communication plan is lacking a crucial element, or have already lived through*

*a disaster and know you fell short of reaching most residents, it's time to add social media to your communication mix.*

#### How to post

- To maximize the effectiveness of your posts,
- Keep the messages short and actionable
- Be specific on affected areas, emergency actions, and radio information
- Post links to more detailed information, such as maps and shelter lists
- Include hashtags to amplify your reach
- If possible, update frequently

While the internet is available, post emergency radio frequencies you can use for your family, your church group, your work place, or your community. Indicate which repeater you recommend, along with the offset and tone, or whether your frequency is simplex. Indicate at what time you plan to be on the radio, if you're organizing a net or schedule. Then announce the emergency social media postings on your radio nets as traffic.

#### Finally

Social media has come under fire for several reasons, not the least of which is its rapid distribution of unverified information. People are free to post what they will on many social media sites, which can be good in the way of open expression, while destructive in the way it invites open bullying by those who sense little responsibility for consequence as a result of internet anonymity.

In spite of its shortcomings, we can still leverage social media as a significant platform for emergency contacting and incident information. Because social media is used by people of all ages, you're able to reach more of the interested or affected population than perhaps by any other way.

